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RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1853
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 1894
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO 1805
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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC
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STATE FOR WHA/AND
TREASURY FOR SGOOCH
ENERGY FOR CDAY AND SLADISLAW

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BL](#)
SUBJECT: AYMARA HEARTLAND PREPARED TO MOBILIZE FOR
CONSTITUTION

REF: A. LA PAZ 2557

[1](#)B. LA PAZ 2683

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: On September 28, leaders from Omasuyos Province in La Paz department, a majority Aymara area, threatened to march to Sucre or Santa Cruz to pressure Constituent Assembly members to agree to the MAS' agenda. Leaders from the province told Emboff on October 4 that they had not yet met with the local agrarian union to discuss the march, which seems to be on hold in response to recent agreements reached in Sucre (ref B). The Mayor of Achacachi, the capital of the province, said that he did not support violence and did not want a civil war. He said that his constituents only wanted a guarantee of the Assembly's success, without interference by outside influences, including the MAS and PODEMOS parties. Leaders in the province, who are mainly affiliated with the Pachakuti Indigenous Movement (MIP) party, expressed disagreement with the MAS on political details, articulated concern about the MAS' undemocratic tendencies, and even complained about the lack of economic support provided by the central government, but said they would follow the MAS' lead for the moment. End summary.

Background on Omasuyos Province

[1](#)2. (SBU) Omasuyos Province, in La Paz Department, a majority Aymara area, is the birthplace of the indigenous leader Felipe Quispe, also known as Mallku, and his radical Pachakuti Indigenous Movement (MIP) party. Quispe, a presidential candidate last December, founded the Tupac Katari Indigenous Movement in 1978 and was jailed for his participation in the Tupac Katari guerrilla army during the 1990s. Many of Omasuyos political leaders belong to the MIP party and view Quispe as their teacher. Omasuyos is renowned for its militancy and for being the place that began the downfall of President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada in 2003 through demonstrations and blockades. On September 20, Vice

President Alvaro Garcia Linera gave a speech in Omasuyos encouraging campesinos to take up arms to promote the president's agenda and "overthrow the Santa Cruz oligarchy" (ref A). Regional leaders threatened to march to Sucre or Santa Cruz to pressure the Constituent Assembly members. Emboff met with leaders in three Omasuyos villages -- Huatajata, Huarina, and Achacachi -- on October 4 to review political and economic issues.

13. (SBU) The villages of Omasuyos, although better off than villages in the southern Altiplano because of tourism inflows and a less arid climate, lack basic infrastructure, such as sanitation systems, potable water, and irrigation systems. Tourists passing through the region in route to Lake Titicaca tend to not linger long due to the lack of basic amenities, including restrooms. The residents of the area eke out a living through fishing and traditional farming of potatoes, fava beans, and quinoa. Due to the lack of economic opportunities, the most recent generation of workers have migrated in large numbers to El Alto or cities in the East.

Support for Constituent Assembly

14. (SBU) The deputy mayor of Huarina explained that his constituents want a constitution that is favorable to indigenous interests, unlike the existing constitution into which the indigenous had no input. For example, they want recognition of community justice, which is quick and would treat the poor more equitably than the current system, he said. The deputy mayor said that regional government leaders had not yet met with agrarian union members to discuss a proposed march to Sucre, but were ready to defend the Constituent Assembly, and the original nature of that Assembly, if the need arose.

15. (SBU) The mayor of Achacachi, who was quoted in the press on September 28 threatening an unarmed march on the Constituent Assembly's opposition, responded to Emboff's questions in a more measured fashion than his deputy. He said that his relations with Felipe Quispe were somewhat strained due to his openness with Europe and the U.S., including his friendly reception of Ambassador Greenlee and USAID-donated computers. He said that the proposed march was in response to the September 8 strike in Santa Cruz, Tarija, Beni, and Pando against the Constituent Assembly, and would proceed if the Assembly's success was threatened. However, he said that he did not support violence and that the region did not want a civil war.

16. (SBU) Although the mayor supports the Assembly being original, meaning that it would trump the other branches of government, he believes that the three existing branches should retain their authority until after the new constitution is approved. He said that Assembly members should renounce their political parties and independently carry out their roles as drafters of the new constitution, without the manipulation of MAS or PODEMOS. He complained that the Assembly did not genuinely represent the indigenous, and expressed concern that the MAS and Evo Morales want to undemocratically control the Assembly and Bolivian politics. He did not agree with the MAS proposal to hold elections again in 2008, but argued that the government should wait until the 2010 scheduled elections. He also complained that the process of convening the Constituent Assembly had happened too fast, without time for the people to understand the purpose of the Assembly, as shown by the 28 percent of Achacachi voters who turned in blank ballots.

Giving Evo a Chance

17. (SBU) The deputy mayor of Huarina and the mayor of Achacachi agreed that it was still too early to evaluate the performance of President Morales and the MAS administration. They said that the people are hopeful about Morales and the GOB's natural resource nationalization policies, and that they would give the president a chance for two to three years. Although they are MIP supporters, they said they

would support the MAS.

Migration Releases Economic Pressure

18. (SBU) Leaders in Huatajata complained that they are neglected by both the central government and the municipal government in Achacachi, and thus, lack funds for important local development projects, such as irrigation, basic sanitation, and potable water systems. Emboff visited the country's first indigenous school, founded in 1914, where the school director was pleased to have received one computer from the 47 donated to Achacachi by USAID and nine from the central government, but lamented the school's inability to fund Internet connections or to buy desks on which to place the computers. Residents of the area rely on fishing, farming, and some commerce with Peru for income. Leaders from both Huatajata and Huarina said that there is not a large unemployment problem because of mass migration to El Alto and cities in the East.

19. (SBU) Comment: Although leaders from Bolivia's Aymara heartland do not always agree with President Morales and the MAS on political details and even criticize the GOB for lack of economic support, they are unlikely to oppose the MAS until it has had a two to three year opportunity to prove itself. Progress in the Constituent Assembly has deterred Omasuyos' mobilization for now, although we are sure to hear more from this region in the future. End comment.
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